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[Text: Dr. John J. Moran, "Official Memoranda of the Death of Edgar A. Poe," *New York Herald*, October 28, 1875, p. 4, cols. 1-3.]

[page 4, column 1]

# EDGAR ALLAN POE

A Monument to the Memory of the Poet.

THE HISTORIC GRAVE AT BALTIMORE.

A Graphic Narrative of the Poet's Last Hours.

The Thrilling Story of the Attending Physician.

"REST, SHORE, NO MORE."

BALTIMORE, Oct. 27, 1875.

For twenty-six years Edgar A. Poe has slept in a nameless grave at the corner of Fayette and Greene streets, in this city. A mound, covered with green turf -- the velvet he so beautifully describes in some of his prose poems -- is all that marks his resting place; and were it not for the love of a few friends and the curiosity and admiration of those who have read his works it would long since have been so confounded with others in its immediate vicinity as to be undistinguishable. To-morrow, however, this long neglected duty will be fulfilled by the dedication of a very fine monument.

## THE MONUMENT.

The first attempt was made by one of the poet's own family. A handsome headstone was carved out for the green mound in Old Westminster graveyard, but Fate decreed it should remain without a monument until one worthy of the dust it covered should be chiselled. A train of cars crashed down the railroad near which the stone was placed, bounced off the track and shattered it to atoms. At length the public school teachers, by no means the wealthiest class of this community, weary of the idle protestations of those who were clamorous with their mouths, but chary with their pockets, determined that this blot upon Baltimore should no longer remain. They formed themselves into an association, and, with the assistance of Mr. George W. Childs, of Philadelphia, succeeded in raising a sum of money sufficient for the construction of a handsome monument. The project was under consideration for some years. Dr. Thomas D. Baird, the late President of the Baltimore City College, was the originator of the idea, and Professor William Elliott, who succeeded Dr Baird at his death, has carried out his plans with great energy and perseverance. In the spring of 1875, the requisite amount of money having been collected, the construction of the monument was placed in the hands of Mr. Hugh Sisson. Mr. Sisson, mindful of the object for which his services were solicited, has allowed the committee to go far beyond their original plan; in other words, he has constructed the whole affair at about cost, allowing his

commissions to form his subscription to the general fund. Mr. George A. Frederick, a prominent architect, of this city, was the designer, and Mr. Volck, the artist, supplied the model for the medallion of Poe. The monument is completed. The writer has seen it a number of times. The first impression was one of disappointment. After hearing so much one is apt to expect something colossal; but this is a plain Grecian pedestal, formed of Italian marble, with a granite base. The base is about a foot high and the pedestal from seven to eight. But, like every good thing, it improves upon acquaintance. The means for its completion were limited. Mr. Frederick, having this in view, proposed to make it simple, chaste and dignified, to strike more by graceful outline than by crowding with unnecessary ornamentation -- like the writings of him it is proposed to commemorate -- and his intention has been faithfully carried out. By degrees its beauty grows upon the spectator, and its diminutive proportions fade from the mind. Only two of the blocks will be used at present; one for the bas-relief of the poet and the other for a simple inscription recording his name and the dates of his birth and death. Mr. Henry Steinhausen, the veteran of Mr. Sisson's workshop, to whom the task of making the bas-relief was intrusted, has produced, so the friends of Poe say, the best likeness of the poet extant. We often hear of "speaking marble," but seldom realize its meaning. The beautifully chiselled features and wavy hair, the melancholy but refined and intellectual expression, and the deep, rolling eyes of the poet, all are there, and look as though at any moment the tongue might utter,

Never, never more!

Indeed, the marble is a far more faithful likeness than the model, and would reflect credit upon sculptors of "fair renown."

The monument will be unveiled on Thursday with imposing ceremonies, in the rear of Westminster church, where now repose the remains of Poe. The exercises will consist of a brief history of the memorial from its inception, by Professor William Elliott, chairman of the committee, to be followed by an ode, delivered, probably by Mr. Gill, of Boston, the author of "Lotus Leaves," which contains an admirable biography of Poe. An address will then be delivered by Professor Henry E. Shepherd, Superintendent of Public Education in the city, and the Hon. John H. B. Latrobe, a former friend of Poe, will close the exercises with some personal recollections of the poet. The poets and prose writers -- in fine, the literati of America will be present. Bryant and Longfellow have given favorable responses to the committee. Professor Shepherd is in receipt of letters from Alfred Tennyson, the poet laureate of England, and Dr. Inglesby, expressing the greatest interest in the occasion, the former requesting a copy of the design of the monument. The occasion will possess peculiar interest in that it is the first memorial to an American because of his literary character, and also because of the fact that Disraeli, Spedding, Tennyson and statesmen and noblemen in England are now moving to secure the erection of a monument to Lord Byron, a man so similar to Edgar A. Poe in many features of his remarkable character.

#### POE'S CLOSING HOURS.

The fourteen closing hours of Edgar A. Poe's life, about which history has been so confused, slanderous and erroneous, are fully accounted for in the official record of this short but fateful

period of the poet's life given below. The narrative is important, not only as the first authentic account of the poet's death which has ever appeared in print, but as setting at rest the scandalous story that he had been kidnapped by political partisans and plied with liquor until he died in the agonies of mania a potu. It seems that he was on his way from Norfolk to Philadelphia to marry "Lenore," his intended second wife, when, as is supposed, he succumbed to an overdose of opium, which he had taken to allay the excitement of his very sensitive nervous system. Wandering from the hotel at Baltimore [column 2:] to the river side, he fell asleep on the wharf, was recognized by some friends and conveyed in a state of stupor to the famous Washington University Hospital, where fourteen hours afterward he died. The record of this closing period of the poet's life is now preserved to history, finding light for the first time in the columns of the HERALD through the following transcript of memoranda which were made by the physician in charge of the hospital at the time the unfortunate man was under his care: --

OFFICIAL MEMORANDA OF THE DEATH OF EDGAR A. POE,  
BY J. J. MORAN, M. D.

Edgar A. Poe was brought in a hack to the Washington University Hospital, situated on Broadway, north of Baltimore Street, Baltimore city, on the 7th of October, 1849. He had been found lying upon a bench in front of a large mercantile house on Light Street wharf. He was in a stupor, whether from liquor or opium was not at first known. A gentleman passing along the pavement noticed several persons collected about the spot, and looking in through the crowd was suddenly impressed with the face, and on close inspection recognized the poet. He had been there since early dawn.

A policeman sent for a hack and directed the hackman to convey him to the above-named hospital, which was in my charge, being the resident physician and living in the dwelling attached thereto. It was about ten o'clock in the forenoon when he entered the house. He was immediately placed in a private room, carefully undressed and critically examined. I had not then any knowledge of his previous condition or what were his habits. There was no smell of liquor upon his person or breath. There was no delirium or tremor. His skin was pallid, with slight nausea at the stomach and a strong disposition to sleep. His condition was more of a stupor. He was sponged with lukewarm water, sinapisms applied to the feet, thighs and abdomen, and cold applied to the head.

I had the room darkened and he was otherwise made as comfortable as he could have been in his own room at home. I placed an experienced nurse at the threshold of his room door, with orders to watch him closely and prevent the slightest noise from without, and give me notice of any sign of wakefulness or consciousness. In half an hour after I left him he threw the cover from his breast, opened his eyes and said --

"Where am I?"

The nurse gave me the signal and I was immediately at his side. I drew a chair close to the bed, took his hand in my own, and with the other smoothed his forehead, pushing back the dark raven curls that covered it, and asked him how he felt?

He said, "Miserable."

"Do you suffer any pain?"

"Do you feel sick at the stomach?"

"Yes."

"Are you thirsty?"

"No,"

"Does your head suffer -- have you pain there?" putting my hand on his head.

"Yes."

"Does it feel heavy or dull?"

"Heavy; mind cloudy," he said.

"How long have you been sick?"

"Can't say."

"Where have you been stopping?"

"In a hotel on Pratt Street, opposite the depot."

"Have you a trunk, or valise, or anything there which you would like to have with you?"

"Yes, a trunk with my papers and manuscripts."

"If you order it I will send for it."

He thanked me, and said, "Do so at once," remarking, "You are very kind -- where am I, Doctor?"

"You are in the care of your friends;" to which he replied, "My best friend would be the man who would blow my brains out with a pistol."

"Try and be quiet, Mr. Poe; we will do all we can to make you comfortable and relieve your distress."

"Oh; wretch that I am! Sir, when I behold my degradation and ruin, what I have suffered and lost, and the sorrow and misery I have brought upon others, I feel that I could sink through this

bed into the lowermost abyss below, forsaken by God and man, an outcast from society. Oh, God, the terrible strait I am in! Is there no ransom for the deathless spirit?"

"Mr. Poe, do try and compose yourself, and take this draught ; it will soothe and revive you."

He reached out his hand to take the glass, the nurse raising his head, while I administered the cordial. He drank it and was laid down, closing his eyes as though going to sleep.

I remained by his side, watching closely every breath, manner of breathing, and trying to make out his case and my diagnosis. I had been impressed that he was suffering from the too free use of alcoholic drink only from what I could gather from those who saw him on the wharf, and did not know how long he had been in this state, but he did not manifest symptoms to, justify their suspicions. He had no tremor, was not fidgety with his hands or impatient, but answered all my questions calmly and rationally. There was great pallor of face, an injection of the coats of the eye, and pulse sharp and quick. I noticed some twitching of the eyelids while closed, also of the muscle of the face, and slight jerking of the limbs. He remained in this state about one hour, when he again waked up, suddenly opening his eyes.

I said to him, both to be of service and to ascertain whether he would be inclined to take liquor, for with intemperate subjects who have delirium tremens a little of the hair of the dog that bites them often produces a cure: --

"Will you take a little toddy?"

He opened wide his large eyes and fixed them so steadily upon me, and with such anguish in them; that I looked from him to the wall beyond the bed. He said: --

"Sir, if its potency would transport me to the Elysian bowers of the undiscovered spirit world I would not taste it -- I would not taste it. Of its horrors who can tell?"

"I must administer an opiate to give you sleep and rest."

Then he rejoined: --

"Twin-devil and spectre of crazed and doomed mortals of earth and perdition!"

"Mr. Poe, it is very necessary that you should be quiet and free from excitement; you are in a critical condition, and excitement will hasten your death."

"Doctor, I am ill. Is there no hope?"

"The chances are against you."

"How long, oh, how long, before I see my dear Virginia? My dear Lenore! I would like to see my love, my dear love!"

“I will send for any one you wish to see.”

I knew nothing of his family, and asked, “Have you a family ?”

“No, my wife is dead, my dear Virginia ; my mother-in-law lives. Oh, how my heart bleeds for her! Death’s dark angel has done his work. I am so rudely clashed upon the storm without compass or helm. Language cannot tell the gushing wave that swells, sways and sweeps, tempest-like, over me, signaling the ‘larum of death Doctor, write to my mother, Maria Clemm. Tell her her Eddie is here. No, too late! too late! I must lift the pall and open to you the secret that sears the heart, and, dagger-like, pierces the soul. I was to have been married in ten days.” (Here he stopped to weep.)

“Shall I send for the lady?” I asked, supposing she lived in the city.

“Too late! too late!”

I said, “Oh, no; I will send my carriage immediately.”

“No, write, write to both. Inform them of my illness and death both at the same time.”

“Give me their address?”

“Mrs. Shelton, Norfolk, Va., and Maria Clemm, Lowell, Mass.”

Noticing the color rising to his face and the blood-vessels filling up on his temples, and the eyes becoming congestive and inclining upward, I asked no more questions, but ordered ice to his head and heat to his extremities, repeating the cordial with an anodyne, and waited with the nurse outside the door for fifteen minutes. No further change, except that his pulse had increased in frequency and was feeble and flying. I kept a nurse in his room, and another outside to prevent his being disturbed and to notify me of any change that might take place.

I had sent for his cousin, Neilson Poe, having learned he was his relative, and a family named Reynolds, who lived in the neighborhood of the hospital. These were the only persons whose names I had heard him mention living in the city. Mr. W. N. Poe came, and the female members of Mr. Reynolds’s family. He continued in an unconscious state for more than an hour. On again examining his pulse I found it very feeble, sharp and irregular -- 120 to the minute. I proceeded to give him a febrifuge mixture and a stimulant. He partially aroused while getting the draught and seemed to stare, the pupils of his [column 3:] eyes dilating and contracting alternately. I sat down by his bedside, took his hand and placed my fingers upon his wrist, and felt assured, from all the symptoms, that nature was yielding. I had beef tea administered, with ammonia. My particular friend, Professor John C. S. Monkur -- who gave much of his time to the inmates of the hospital, and particularly, when specially called upon, was always ready, and cheerfully attended the summons night or day when within reach -- had been sent for two or three times previously; but being out, attending to his general patients, had just returned, and came in at the moment. As soon as he fixed his eyes upon him he said, “Doctor, he’s dying.”

I replied, "Yes, I fear it is all over."

He carefully examined his case, and, being in possession of all the facts in regard to the agents employed and symptoms presented -- which were carefully noted down in a record book of the hospital -- he gave it as his opinion, which I was fully prepared to corroborate, that Poe's death was caused by excessive nervous excitement from exposure, followed by loss of nervous power. The most appropriate name for his disease is encephalitis.

The doctor advised free use of wine, beef tea and gentle cordials, while using ice to the head. The patient raised his hand to his mouth, as though he wanted drink. A small lump of ice was placed upon his tongue. I then gave him a mouthful of water to see whether he could swallow freely. He took it, swallowing with some difficulty; but he drank a wine-glass of beef tea. He seemed to revive, and opened his eyes, fixing his gaze upon the transom over his room door, each room having transoms over the door for ventilation and air. He kept them moved for more than a minute. He was lying directly polite this transom. He seemed trying to articulate, was inaudible. At last he spoke feebly.

"Doctor it's all over. Write 'Eddie is no more.'"

"Eddie" was a term used by Mrs. Clemm, his mother-in-law.

"Mr. Poe permit me to say you are near your end. Have you any wish or word for friends?"

He said "Evermore!"

I continued -- "Look to your Saviour. There is mercy for you and for all mankind. 'God is love.' "

"The arched heavens," he rejoined, "encompass me, and God has His decrees legibly written upon the frontlets of every created human being, and demons incarnate, their goal will be the seething waves of black despair."

"Hope and trust Him."

"Self-murderer, there is a gulf beyond the stream Where is the buoy, lifeboat, ship of fire, sea of brass. Test, shore no more!"

His eyes turned upward until the white balls were all that could be seen. Muscular twitching and jerking set in, and with one general tremor all was over.

This occurred about twelve o'clock, midnight, 7th October, 1849.

I had meantime learned from him, and afterward from the porter at the hotel on Pratt Street, then Bradshaw's, now called the Maltby House, that he arrived there, on the evening of the 5th; was seen to go to the depot to take the cars for Philadelphia, and that the conductor, on going through the cars for tickets, found him lying in the baggage car insensible. He took him as far as



Havre de Grace, where the cars then passed each other, or as far as Wilmington, I forget which, and placed him in the train coming to Baltimore. He had left his trunk at the hotel in Baltimore. Arriving on the evening train he was not seen by any person about the hotel when he returned to the city. The presumption is he wandered about during the night, and found a bench sometime before morning to sleep upon on Light Street wharf, where he was seen and taken from about nine o'clock the next morning.

A short time before his death I received his trunk from the hotel, as per order, and put it in the care of Mr. Neilson Poe, for his mother-in-law, Mrs. Maria Clemm. I have her letters to me, after his death, thanking me for attention, kindness, etc., to her darling Eddie.

After death he was washed and carefully laid out, dressed in a suit of black cloth, and placed in state in the large rotunda of the college building, where hundreds of friends and admirers came in crowds to pay their last tribute of respect to the deceased. Not less than fifty ladies were each furnished, at their earnest solicitations, with a small lock of his beautiful black hair. His body was kept in the rotunda for one whole day. On the morning of the 9th he was buried in the Westminster burying-ground, corner of Fayette and Green Streets, Baltimore, it being the old family burial ground of the Poes. A large number of our citizens, many of the most distinguished and prominent literary and professional men, followed the remains to their sepulture. But of all the crowds of citizens and mourners that wept over the lamented poet there was one mourner not visible. Yet the depth of her sincerity and grief could not be measured by mortal eyes, and would defy the most skeptical doubt. I mean his mother-in-law, Mrs. Maria Clemm, who was his aunt as well, he having married his first cousin. I had communicated, as soon as his death occurred, to her the sad intelligence of his fate; to which she replied in strains of the deepest sorrow, and thanking me for my attention and communication, and in her own language -- the letters being in my possession yet

"My prayer is that God may bless you for soothing the dying hours of my precious darling Eddie. Please get Mr. N. Poe to return his last letter to me, for I prize it above rubies. It is a hundred times more precious. He was the most affectionate of sons to me. It was a devotion he had gained and kept until death."

Poe's appearance had not materially changed. His face was calm and a smile seemed to play around his mouth, and all who saw him exclaimed, "How natural he looks!" There was no discoloration of the skin. He looked to be in a natural sleep.

He was a handsome man, elegantly dressed, and but few could claim advantage over him in this regard. His head was exquisitely modelled, forehead very prominent and largely developed, its measurement corresponding to that of the great Napoleon Bonaparte, a cast of which was in my possession. His skin was fair, hair raven black and inclined to curl, teeth perfectly good, and eyes gray. His weight was about 145 pounds, and height five feet ten inches. His hands were as delicate as a lady's. His shroud was made by my wife and a few of her lady friends, who considered it an honor to contribute in anywise to the distinguished poet. A gentleman from Europe, a celebrated physician, was with him a few minutes before his death, and wept over the deceased. He said he considered him the greatest critic and best American poet living. He had read all his works and sought eagerly for everything relating thereto.



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[This is Dr. Moran's second recorded document concerning Poe's death. Unfortunately, his various accounts do not really agree with each other, and his story grew more elaborate with each telling, suggesting that it is largely unreliable. There is no recorded death certificate, and this self-proclaimed "official Memoranda" is hardly an official document in any meaningful sense of the concept. Among other verifiable details, Poe's height is generally given as 5 foot 8 inches, and his weight as about 140 pounds. Surviving locks of Poe's hair clearly prove that it was brown rather than "raven black." This article was reprinted in the 1876 edition of the 4-volume *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, New York: W. J. Widdleton, pp. cxvi-cxxiv, but without the introductory comments.]

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[S:0 - NYH, 1878]